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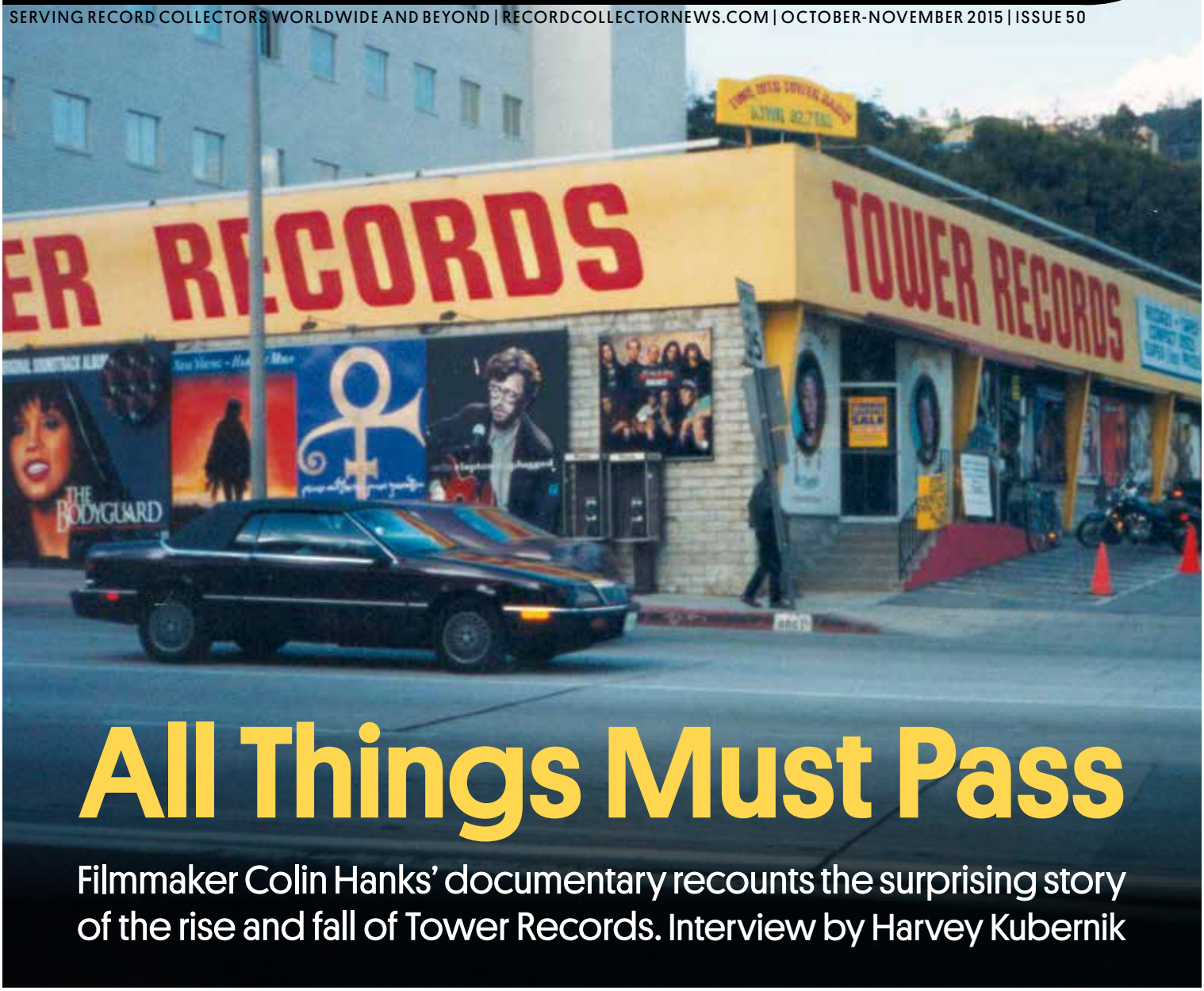

All Things Must Pass

Filmmaker Colin Hanks' documentary recounts the surprising story of the rise and fall of Tower Records. Interview by Harvey Kubernik

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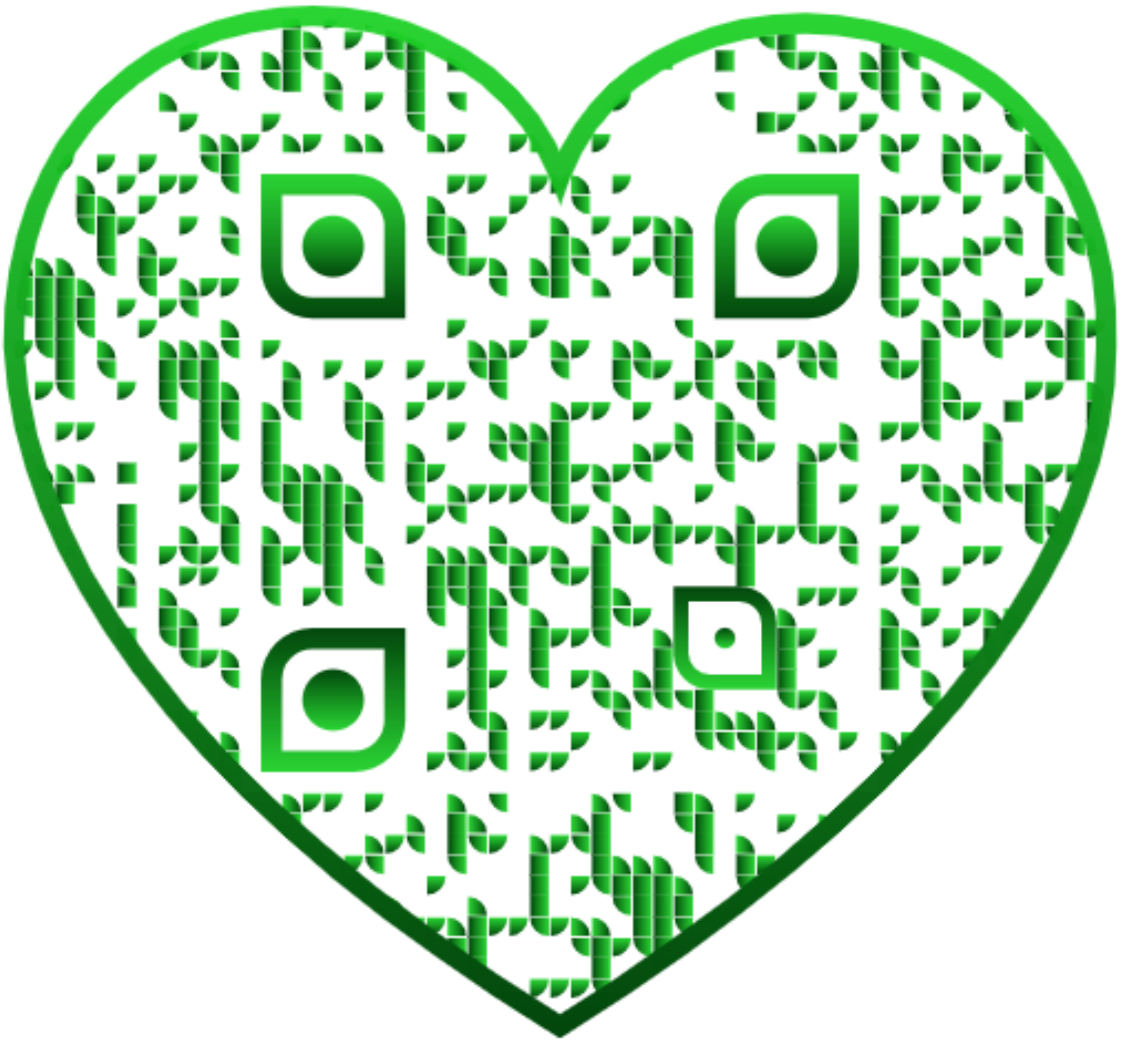

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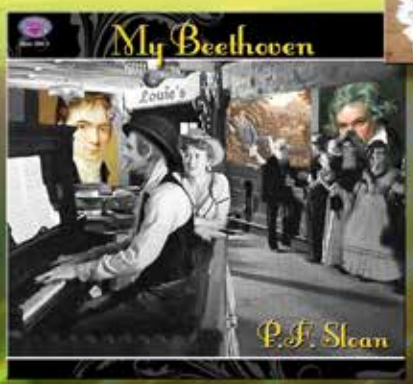

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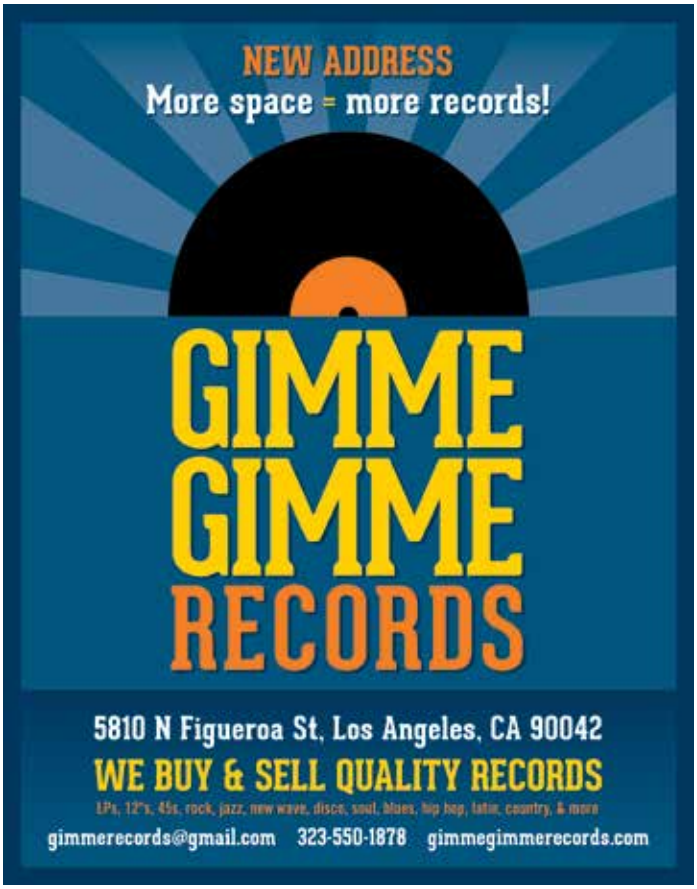
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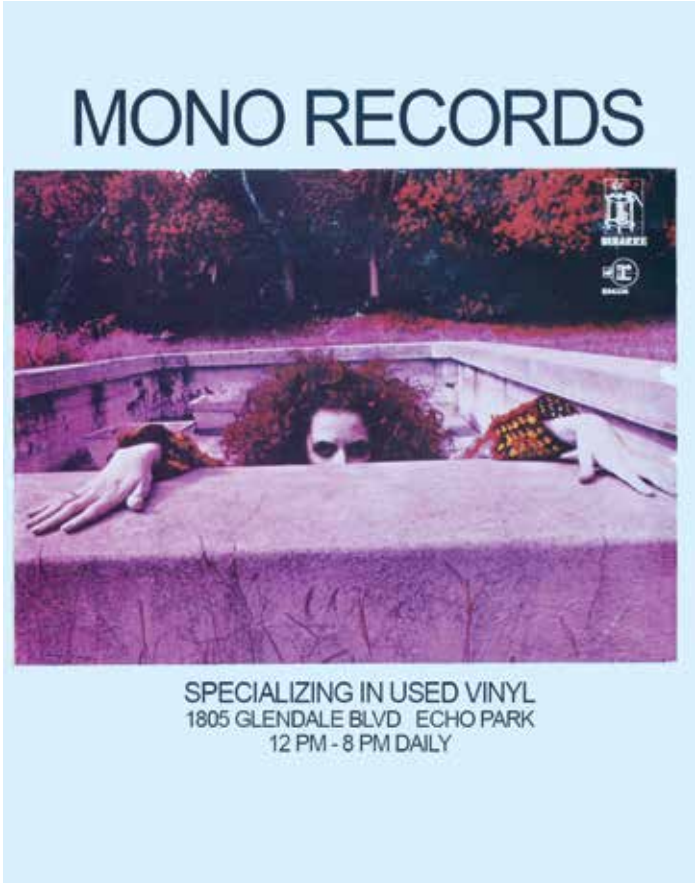

RECORD COLLECTOR NEWS
レコード コレクター ニュース
VOL. 8 NO.2, OCT.–NOV. 2015, ISSUE 50

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WEB DESIGN
designsimple.com

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ON THE COVER
Marvin Gaye from the Motown Records Archives

"If it's illegal to rock and roll, throw my ass in jail."
—Kurt Cobain

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Published seven times per year.

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Distributed FREE at record stores and conventions on the West Coast, Chicago and New York City.

Subscriptions are available by first class mail. Seven issues, $35.00. (Canada and Mexico $50 all other countries $75.) USA subscriptions can order your subscription online at recordcollectornews.com. International subscriptions should email jim@recordcollectornews.com. *Record Collector News*. P.O. Box 5664, Glendale, CA 91221. 818-209-5685.

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PUSHIN' TOO HARD
THE SEEDS

Fall 2015 Schedule

10/3 Sacramento, CA - Crest Theatre
11/7 Santa Ana, CA - Frida Cinema
11/13 Phoenix, AZ - Filmbar
11/18-19 Santa Fe, NM - Jean Cocteau Cinema
11/20-22 Albuquerque, NM - Guild Cinema

"A MUST SEE FILM." New Times

"HOT, TERSE 45S" Rolling Stone

"THIS MAY HAVE HAVE BEEN THE BEST LIVE ACT OF THE ENTIRE GARAGE-PUNK ERA." Shindig

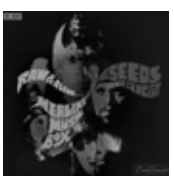
"SKY GOT IT RIGHT." Kim Fowley

Musician, composer, actor, and director Neil Norman proudly presents his full-length rock'n'roll documentary film which tells the fantastic, gleeful, tragic tale of 1960s garage rock wunderkinds THE SEEDS! Using vintage footage, rare photos, memorabilia and audio, and fresh interviews with band members and associates, as well as notable fans and observers, "The Seeds: Pushin' Too Hard" relates the bizarre rage-to-riches-to-rags tale of the rock quartet who took Los Angeles by storm in the mid-60s, and is credited with creating the idea of "flower power."

Featuring Iggy Pop, Kim Fowley and many other scene heavyweights, you will see why the documentary has been called a "quintessential" rock tale [New Times] and the band christened the "key progenitors of garage rock and psychedelia" [Ugly Things].

For trailer, event info and more, visit pushintoohard.com

Killer reissues with unreleased tracks, lavish packaging and liner notes that are a real treat for true fans. Produced by Alec Palao and Neil Norman.



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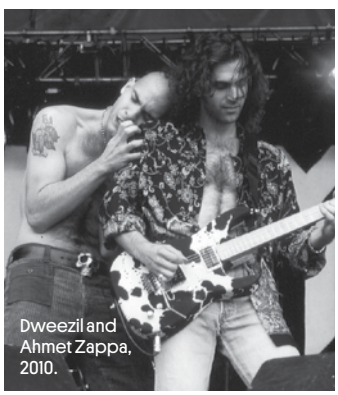
KAPLAN'S KORNER

A Memorial and a Celebration

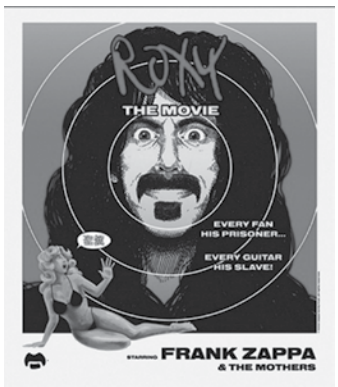
FAREWELL GAIL ZAPPA

GAIL ZAPPA PASSED AWAY ON October 17, 2015. Gail was the wife of **Frank Zappa** and the trustee of the Zappa Family Trust. In that capacity Gail watched over the numerous records and videos released since Frank passed in 1993. And what a treasure trove she presented to us. All the Universal reissues are by far the best sounding. So thank you Gail for giving us the music. Music *is* the BEST!

A week after Gail's passing the Zappa Family premiered ***ROXY The Movie*** at the Grauman's Egyptian Theater in Hollywood. The mood was both sad that celebratory that night.



Dweezil and Ahmet Zappa, 2010.



At an introduction before the show started Zappa's son **Ahmet** shared with the full house how he was 'inside his mothers tummy" when this project first started.

By the end of the movie the crowd was all smiles and completely blown away. This has to be the very best example of a Zappa Band performance live on video. And Frank has some great live DVD's.

Zappa band alums drummer **Ralph Humphrey** and trombone player **Bruce Fowler** were at the screening and they answered a few questions after the movie ended. Both former Zappa band mates commented on how hard that music was to play and get

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

right. Bruce stated that was the hardest trombone music in the world. Ralph was pretty impressed with his 40-year younger self. As they both should be. To watch that band cook like that is pure joy. . Highly recommended. Get the DVD too.

"We did it, Mom."

Ahmet Zappa at the screening of "Roxy the Movie"

Musicians cooking their buts off in Roxy the Movie are:

Frank Zappa (lead guitar, vocals), George Duke (keyboards, synthesizer, vocals), Bruce Fowler (trombone), Napoleon Murphy Brock (flute, tenor saxophone, vocals), Tom Fowler (bass guitar), Ralph Humphrey (drums), Chester Thompson (drums), and Ruth Underwood (percussion).

Jim Kaplan

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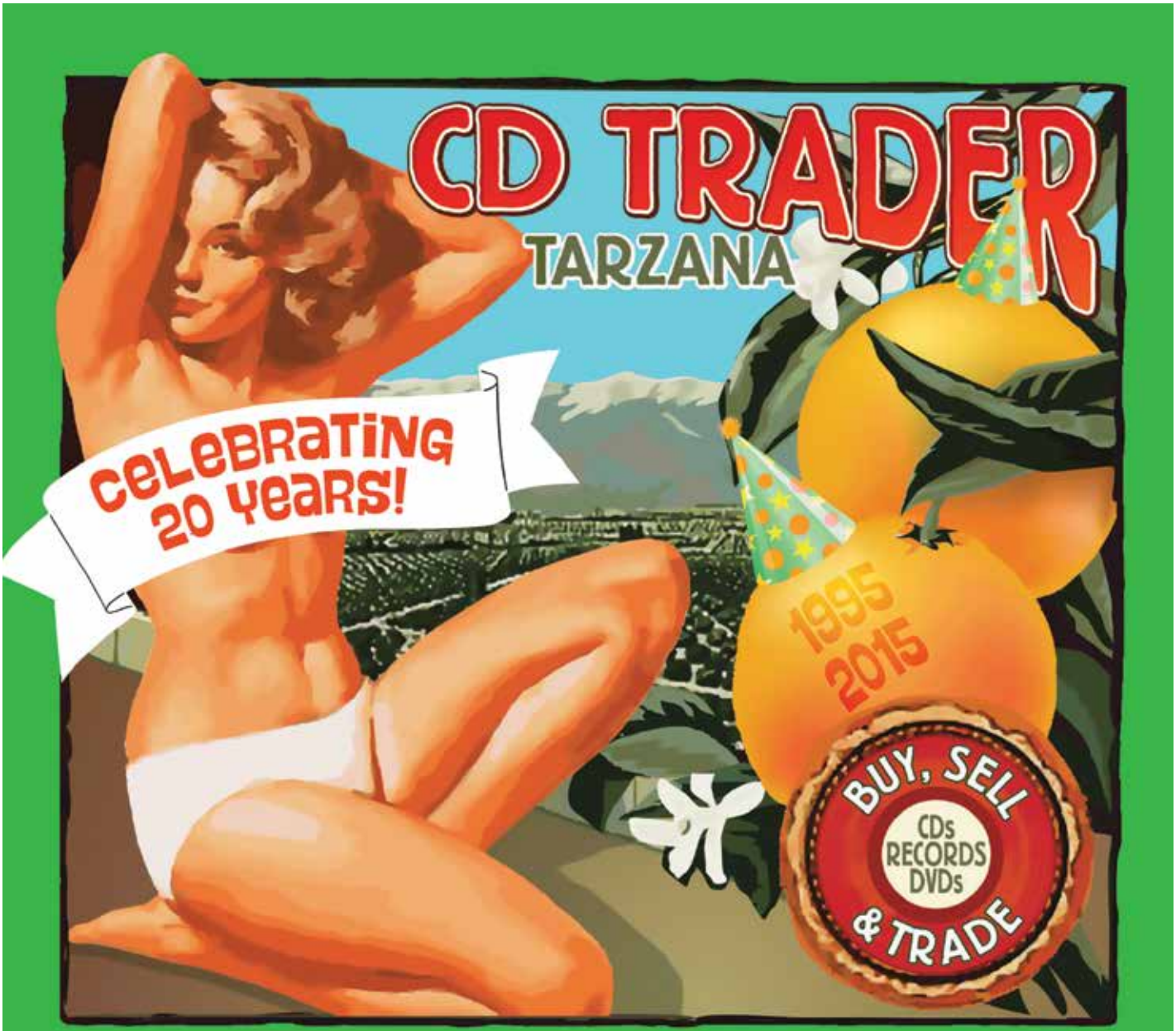

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ALL THINGS MUST PASS

For almost 50 years, Russ Solomon's Tower Records chain, founded in Sacramento, reigned as one of the world's premiere music retailers. In his new documentary, *All Things Must Pass*, filmmaker Colin Hanks examines the rise and fall of the legendary record retailer.

BY HARVEY KUBERNIK

ESTABLISHED IN 1960, TOWER RECORDS WAS ONCE a retail powerhouse with two hundred stores, in thirty countries, on five continents. From humble beginnings in a small-town drugstore in Sacramento, Tower Records in 1999 generated $1 billion. In 2006, the company filed for bankruptcy.

What went wrong? Everyone thinks they know what killed Tower Records: The Internet. But that's not the story. *All Things Must Pass* is a feature documentary film directed by Colin Hanks examining this ground-breaking company's explosive trajectory, the tragic demise, and legacy forged by its rebellious founder and visionary, Russ Solomon.

Former Tower employees along with Bruce Springsteen, Elton John and Dave Grohl are on-screen interviews.

I went to the 1970 opening of Tower Records in Los Angeles on Sunset Blvd. The first LP I purchased there was the debut album of Leon Russell.

I knew the location already as I used to frequent the same space, formerly occupied by electronics wizard and entrepreneur Earl "Madman" Muntz. Earl sold gadgets, installed stereo units and 8-track cartridge players in automobiles. The musical genius and arranger Jack Nitzsche was the first person in town I remember who had a stereo installed in his vehicle by Muntz.

All Things Must Pass is a very important movie for anyone who ever found sound and audio romance in a record store. It is a melodic, spiritual, retail and cautionary rack-job celluloid tale.

Filmmaker Colin Hanks has really connected the cinematic seeds of Tower's birth that began in Sacramento and sprouted globally.

After viewing *All Things Must Pass*, I no longer feel any sense of guilt whatsoever from offering a lit match one night to Bobby Womack for his Kool Menthol cigarette in the back room of the Tower store in L.A., under a No Smoking Sign.

Actor/director Colin Hanks is a founding partner at Company Name with producer Sean Stuart, where he primarily directs and produces documentary films.

Colin is also known for his success as an actor, and coming off his Emmy Award- and Golden Globe-nominated performance in the FX miniseries *Fargo,* Colin has most recently finished shooting *Elvis and Nixon*, a recreation of the meeting at the White House between Elvis Presley and President Nixon, starring alongside Kevin Spacey and Michael Shannon. Hanks currently stars as Greg Short in the CBS-TV sitcom, *Life in Pieces*.

COLIN HANKS

Harvey Kubernik: How did All Things Must Pass come together?

Colin Hanks: It's been a long journey, that's for sure. It started off at a dinner I was having around the time the stores were closing. Someone said in passing, "Hard to believe that it all started in that tiny little drugstore in Sacramento." It was like a light bulb went off. I knew the company had started in Sacramento. It had always been a source of civic pride.

"The hometown aspect is a really great by-product of it. And obviously, the hometown connection for me and my producing partner Sean [Stuart] is undeniable. We felt like we were incredibly lucky to have been raised in Sacramento, so we inherently knew an important facet of the story: here is not only Russ Solomon, but also this group of people that are from Sacramento who all went off to do this incredible thing around the world. We definitely felt we understood all of this, being from Sacramento.

"Some of my mother's close friends had even worked at both the Sacramento and San Francisco locations, but I didn't know about the beginnings of the company. That truly got my wheels spinning. I was dumbfounded that no one else had made a feature-length documentary on this amazing company.

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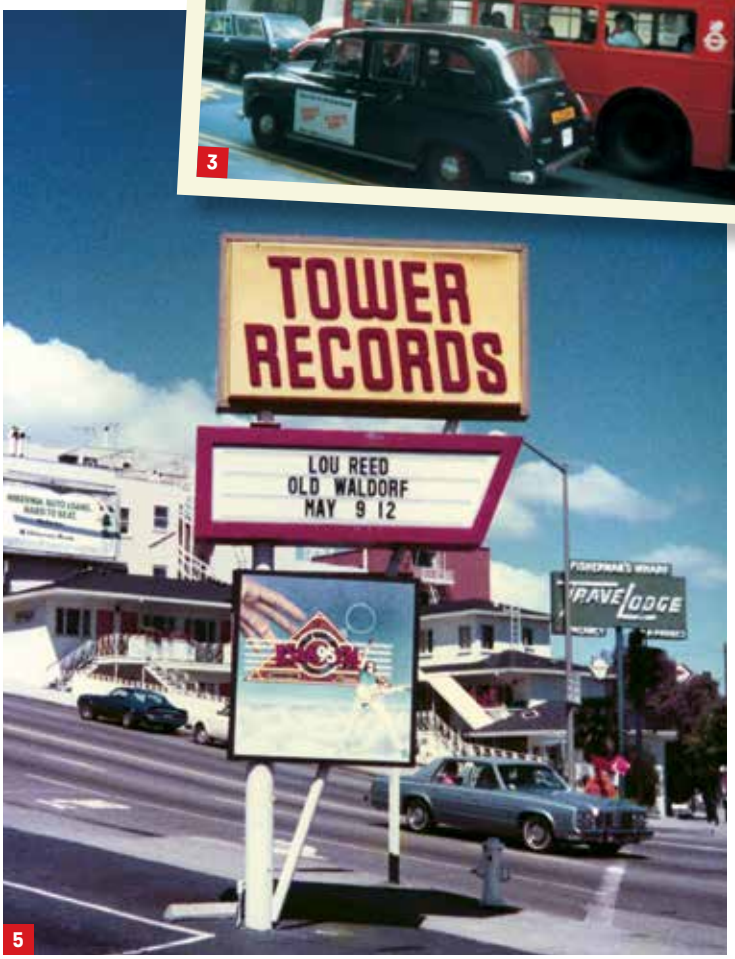

1. Owner and founder, Russ Solomon's (front) Tower Records was one of the world's largest record retailers for almost 50 years. **2.** Original Tower building on Watt Street in Sacramento, CA, 1964. **3.** London, 1982. **4.** New York store, 1980. **5.** San Francisco location, 1979. **6.** Solomon in the stacks, circa 1980s.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Q: How did you first become interested in Tower Records and Russ Solomon?

C.H.: Once you meet Russ, it only takes about three seconds to know that he is a total character and just a really great guy. It actually started much earlier than that. I suppose growing up in Sacramento and going to Tower to buy my first cassettes and CDs was the starting point. I have a lot of memories of those stores as a kid. As I got older, going to other stores around the world and knowing that they were somehow connected, that left some residual impression on me. It was that initial light bulb moment: hearing how the company started and witnessing how it was ending. That seemed like one hell of a ride that would probably make for an interesting film.

Q: What are the fundamental elements/themes of the film?

C.H.: The overall theme for the film is in the title: *All Things Must Pass*. All great rides have to come to an end sometime. It's like what they yell out in the bar at closing time, you know? That was an initial theme from the beginning. As we dug deeper and got to know the people involved, I was really struck by the family aspect, that bond. These people came together and did something truly special. Some of the staff spent close to 30 years of their lives working on making Tower into what it became.

"I remember which stores I bought specific records from. I tried applying to two different Tower locations during college, but I never heard back. As always, there was a long line of applicants in front of me.

"Tower Records always had the most complete collection of music available to anyone at any time. Their inventory of every kind of music was just great. They were the best."

BRIAN WILSON

Q: What was the most surprising message from those featured in the film?

C.H.: It's been a challenge making a music documentary that isn't focused on one band or one star, but rather on the dedicated staff in the stores. The managers and employees are not always the most celebrated people in rock and roll - but most of time, they are the ones you can relate to the most.

"There were two places in Los Angeles where I knew I could escape. One was the self-realization fellowship on Sunset Boulevard where Paramahansa Yogananda taught — and the other was Tower Records. also on Sunset. Worlds apart but not really, searching for rock 'n' roll records and self-awareness is to me almost the same thing... either way, in both places I felt at peace and inspired all at once."

MICHAEL DES BARRES

"It's a documentary about a guy and his band of misfits who worked in the music business, bonded together, took over the world, had the time of their lives thinking the party would never end - only to have someone flip on the lights and kick 'em out at the last minute.

"My hope is that those who were actually there will remember how great it was and what a unique moment in time it became when Tower first started opening their doors in Sacramento, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. For those who weren't around, I want them to wish that they were!

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

"At the end of the day, I hope it makes everyone want to go directly to their local record store and spend some time going through the bins. You never know who you might meet, or what cool new band or music you might discover.

Q: Tower Records established its own culture and a place where music was sold.

C.H.: Definitely. You know, in a strange way Tower Records was much more about the hang, than about a business transaction. It was really about this being a place you could go and hang out. You could do nothing. You don't have to buy anything if you don't want, or if you can't - which is an important distinction. Also, there are people there that you can have conversations with. You can meet people in the store that are other customers or work at the store that are might possibly change the way you look at things. It's a romantic or simplistic way of saying it, but I think it is kind of true; if you can turn someone onto a record or an artist that you have never heard about, and that becomes "the record that changes your life," that's a big deal.

"I think that's a big reason why I wanted to make the documentary, even if I didn't know this while I was doing it. So many people are concerned about missing that personal bond that you often discovered at the best retail outlets. Are we all missing stuff by not visiting brick and mortar stores? Yes, I believe in all of that. I really think at its core, we're talking about that individual connection you make with a record or with a band. And you remember that. Tower was always like the residue of that exchange. You know what I mean?

"Tower Records on the Sunset Strip was like Disneyland for music fans. It wasn't just a store, it was a destination. You could find everything and the place was always buzzing. Every visit was like going to a great party."

JACKIE DESHANNON

Q: Talk to me about Russ Solomon. Working with him and how you wanted to present him.

C.H.: We booked this meeting with Russ, and I had a pre-conceived notion of what a CEO guy would be. Then you meet Russ and he's the coolest guy in the world. He's very friendly, nice, sharp and funny. He laughed at us at first: "Let's do it, but you guys are crazy... you're nuts and you're never gonna make any money." I'm still trying to prove him wrong on that one.

"I was employed in the San Diego and Westwood stores, and filled in several times in Hollywood. That was 1975-77. "I spent my allowance and my Wonder Years at Tower Records before I became an employee and acolyte. It changed my life in more ways than anyone can imagine: it was the sun at the center of my personal solar system, opening my life to life, love, music and movies! For better or worse, I would not be who I am without having passed through the Tower Dimension."

MICK GARRIS,
FILMMAKER/AUTHOR

"Russ was very adamant about being honest. I almost kind of laugh at my idea of what he was like, prior to our first meeting with him. I was incredibly intrigued by this idea of this guy who starts off selling used records out of his father's drug

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

store. 1940s Americana. This began in a drug store pharmacy and actually ended up becoming this huge gigantic company.

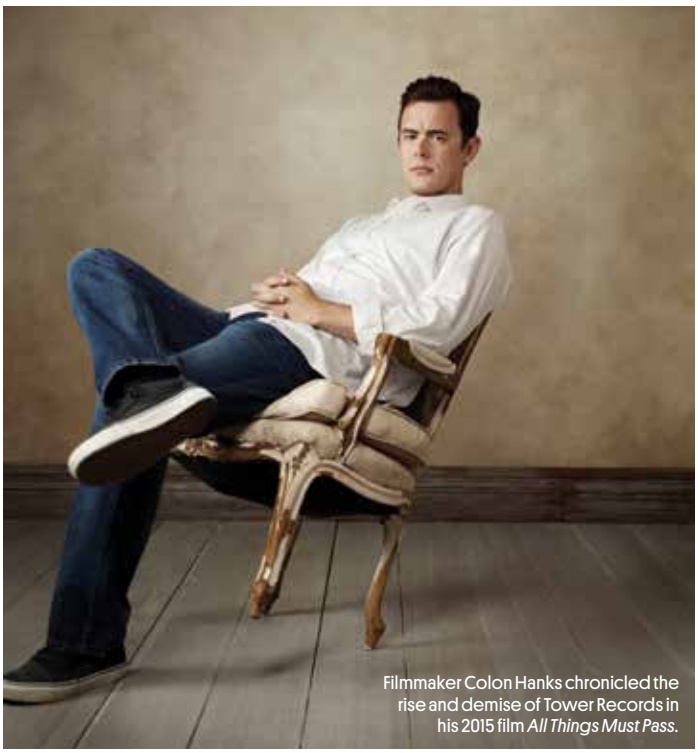
"You know, the biggest saving grace of all this — and it was really purely luck — was the fact that I somehow stumbled upon this idea of a documentary and then met the guy who was arguably responsible for it all. Then, he just happened to be a charismatic guy who could talk for hours about every tiny company detail that existed for forty years.

"That was really when the doc started to take on another life of its own. And the story was really coming to us, as opposed to the other way around. It's much more about the team. What everyone is able to do as a family, as opposed to any one individual effort. To have that point of view is incredible - and for us, to hear that from other people, saying 'Russ told me I should do this.' Russ wanted us to tell the truth from their perspective.

Q: Bruce Springsteen and Elton John are forthcoming and passionate talking heads in the movie.

C.H. I knew very early on from the stories I read and was also told later from the Tower people, that Elton had this very famous quote: that if he had to do it all over again, he would want a job working at Tower Records. I knew about his connection and passion for the store and thought, 'If this is going to be the definitive Tower Records documentary, then we have to have Elton John.' So we did everything we possibly could to get him into the film. Both Elton and his team were incredibly gracious to us in helping make that happen.

"The same goes for Springsteen. The funny thing about Bruce was when he came to the interview, he actually said to me, 'I don't know how many Tower stories I have.' I said, 'I'll just ask you some questions and if you think there is anything you can't speak to, don't worry about it.' I asked him one question and he talked for about 15 minutes. Almost everything he said in the documentary was in that first answer. I asked him maybe five questions. That was the entire interview. He really came through for us.



Filmmaker Colon Hanks chronicled the rise and demise of Tower Records in his 2015 film *All Things Must Pass.*

"Dave Grohl formerly worked at Tower, and that was a very specific reason why we spoke with him. With Bruce and Elton, they shopped at the store; that was it, that was all they did. Elton bought extensively from Tower Records in Los Angeles as well as Atlanta. Bruce sort of seems to be the guy who hung out there a lot. And he kind of speaks to that.

Q: George Harrison's recording of "All Things Must Pass," a Phil Spector production with Harrison, plays over your end credits. Talk to me about securing licensing and permission from the Harrison estate for usage.

C.H.: *All Things Must Pass* was not always the title of this film. But I went up to Sacramento on a lark and decided to drive by the old Tower Records store, which was still there and intact. And that sign was still up: 'All Things Must Pass Thanks Sacramento.' And I just went, "Oh My Gosh! That's the theme..." Even the best parties have to end. And all things must pass.

"That was a pretty obvious sign of what this thing needed to be called. And obviously it made perfect sense thematically. I really liked the fact it was a store employee that put that sign up, I thought there was some poetry in that. Of course I wanted to do everything I could to use the song. But I'm also cognizant and respectful of the fact that the song had personal meaning to George and has a very special meaning. And, so I'm very fortunate that I've met Olivia [Harrison] on numerous occasions and that I met George once a long time ago. He was an incredibly kind man.

"I sent her the film and said, 'I would really like to be able to call this movie *All Things Must Pass*. I'd really like to be able to use the song. But know you have final say on this. And you can not hurt my feelings in anyway shape or form. We'd be really honored if you let us do this.'

"She came back to me after a weekend. 'I've watched it twice. I love it. I can't believe this story. What an incredible story. Yes. Absolutely. Go right ahead.'

"I also really wanted all of the songs in the movie to represent a different section of a Tower Records. And I didn't get them all. (laughs). I didn't get every genre but able to get quite a few.

SEAN STEWART

PRODUCER SEAN STUART IS A FOUNDING partner at Company Name with Colin Hanks.

Harvey Kubernik: What attracted you to the story of Russ Solomon and Tower Records?

Sean Stuart: You never know until you sit down with the person who is your interview subject and five minutes into that first conversation with Russ — Colin and I kind of gave each other a look, and realized that this is a special person with a special story. We also realized that not only is this is a music doc, it's an incredible human interest film. We knew then that it would be worth our time and energy, and later worth all the effort over seven years.

Q: As you dove into this project, what became more obvious to you about Russ Solomon and the impact of Tower?

S.S.: What we as filmmakers hope to achieve is to find the story, find the theme, discover that overriding umbrella of a concept — a music documentary — and make it bigger. We also needed to find other places where people can grab onto things that are broader, and more interesting and more identifiable.

Q: Discuss the music in the movie.

S.S.: There will always be record labels that are initially difficult to crack the egg with regard to music licensing. When we approached major artists such as Steve Miller, the Beach Boys and the Rolling Stones — they got reminiscent at times, and they saw it as our history and legacy. They ultimately felt they needed to jump in and help with this, because it's going to be a great story.

"When we pursued rights holders and record labels, we found that they understood the story, because they actually lived the story. They appreciated the narrative from a broader music industry standpoint. No one really needed to know what the movie was about. For the most part, they got what we were trying to achieve. Colin and I were quite vocal and very descriptive with all of them about what this movie

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

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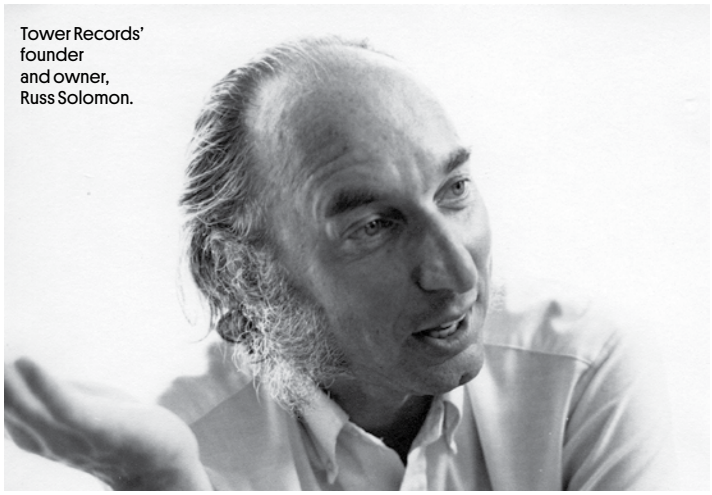
Tower Records' founder and owner, Russ Solomon.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

was intended to be. Most people were pretty excited to have this story told.

RUSS SOLOMON

IN 1968, RUSS SOLOMON LEASED a storefront building in San Francisco for a second Tower retail outlet. Solomon then expanded to West Hollywood in 1970, and then 26 more locations by 1980. Over the next decades, their business spread across the globe. In 2006, Tower was forced to liquidate and declare bankruptcy. In 2015, the 90 year-old Solomon is currently very active in photography.

HK: Why did you consent to actively participate in this film?

Russ Solomon: From time to time, people talked to me about doing a book on the company. Colin and Sean had this idea they came up with. There was a third partner and he was very good friends with my dentist. The dentist fixed us up and we had a meeting. Of course, I told them right off the bat they were nuts. "Why would anyone want to see a movie about a record store?" They persevered, and seven years later here it is...

"What they did was they found a writer [Steven Leckart] and made a story out of it — they got a good editor and the whole thing came together. At the end of the day, after initially thinking, 'how are they gonna pull this thing off?' I actually enjoyed it. I think it got the essence of what we were all about.

Q: I think your plan for opening a San Francisco store in 1968 was a big factor in expanding the visibility of Tower.

R.S.: Well, it was very serendipitous to say the least. Between 1952 and 1960 I had another little company simultaneously, while also having a retail store here in Sacramento. The company was called Record Supply, which was one of the very early rack jobbers and one-stops. We had a warehouse in San Francisco, over on Mission.

"First of all, I was born in San Francisco, but I never really lived there. I always believed that was the place to go and oddly enough, I don't know why, it seemed that we shouldn't be downtown in the business district. We had to be somewhere else that was right - and the accident of finding that place was marvelous.

"The independent labels that came out of the fifties and early sixties helped drive the retail environment. The independent guys were the ones who started it all and drove it forward. They were pretty marvelous. That was the heyday. People like Syd Nathan at King Records, Gene Norman at GNP Crescendo Records, and the Chess Brothers.

"Tower stocked the blues and gave it floor space. I think that my staff knew all about it and liked it. If we had a kid in one of our stores who liked blues or country music, we had a lot of blues and country music in that store. You hunt around for somebody to hire who really knows and loves music.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

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"You gotta look at the timing. We really hit it at exactly the right time.

"We had all that experience of selling music that came out after World War II, 1946 to 1967. Then the Summer of Love happened down at Monterey, *Rolling Stone* started in 1967, and we really got going in 1968.

"Before then, all through those formative years the kids in Sacramento were going into San Francisco on the weekends. They were dressing up what would be now be called hippie clothes, and hanging out and bringing back the whole culture that was happening down there. Sacramento was not that at all, it was hanging onto the coattails of a previous time. Tower and many of us moved into San Francisco and became part of the new swirl. I like to say that we got onto the wave and rode the damn thing until we it went ashore.

Q: The movie also explains your unique concept of management.

R.S.: I always belonged to what I call the 'Tom Sawyer' theory of management. He sat back and watched the other people paint the fence. That's a good idea. First of all, they know more than I do, they are on the street with it. What am I gonna do? Press my word or my tastes and everything else upon them? Not a good idea. It was just a natural thing.

"I was also lucky, growing up in the retail business at my dad's drug store. I started working there when I was 13 years old, and he was a loose kind of guy. He was not a micro-manager or anything.

"One of my ambitions when I first set foot on U.S. soil was to visit Tower Records on Sunset Boulevard. As a kid growing up in England we were always reading about these cool places in the states, CBGBs and The Bowery in New York, The Troubadour, The Roxy and The Rainbow in L.A. and of course, Tower Records. This was also in the days before CDs, so it was a 'real' record store...

"When I did finally get there I couldn't believe it, it was so massive, one could spend an entire day in there and only get to see half of what they had ... It was essentially a toy shop for grown-ups and boy did we come out of there with armfuls of records! It was a terrific experience, the likes of which I fear may have gone forever, but we live in hope ....."

Joe Elliott of Def Leppard

He went into business without any money at all and worked hard and made a good living out of it. To me the whole idea was natural.

"When we got into financial trouble, the banks brought on inexperienced people who did micro-manage and did go for central buying and things like that. I felt that was a terrible idea, I fought it but got nowhere.

Special Thanks: Russ Solomon, Elliot Kendall, Gravitas Ventures, Sunshine Sachs and Company Name.

Harvey Kubernik has been a music journalist for over 44 years and is the author of eight books.In October 2015, Back/Beat/Hal Leonard published Harvey's book *Neil Young Heart of Gold.*

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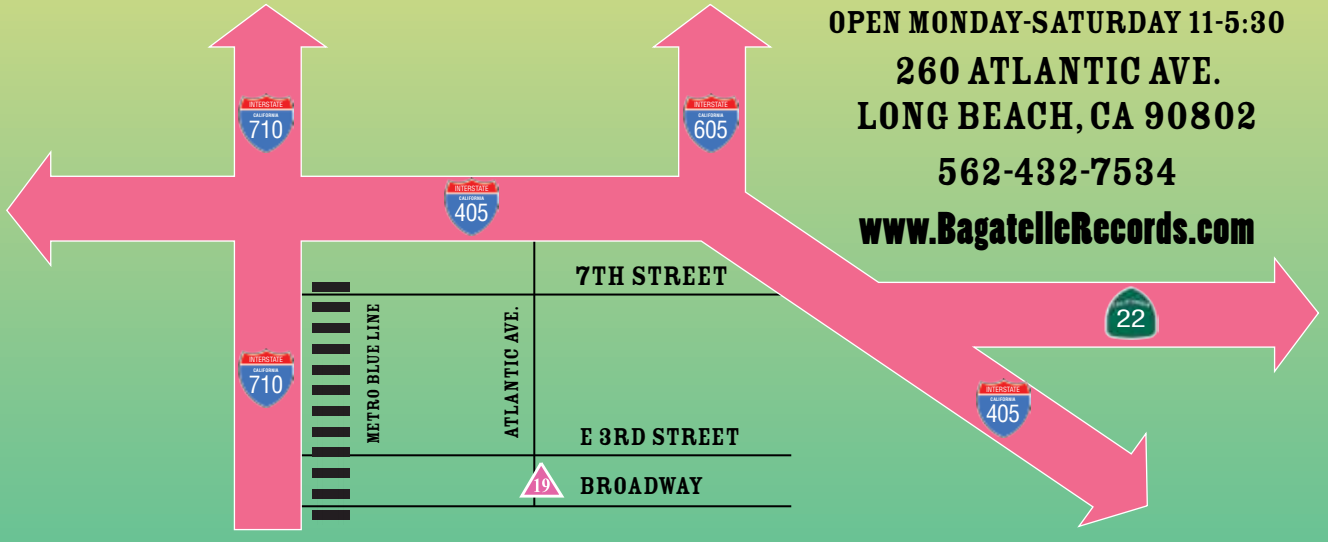

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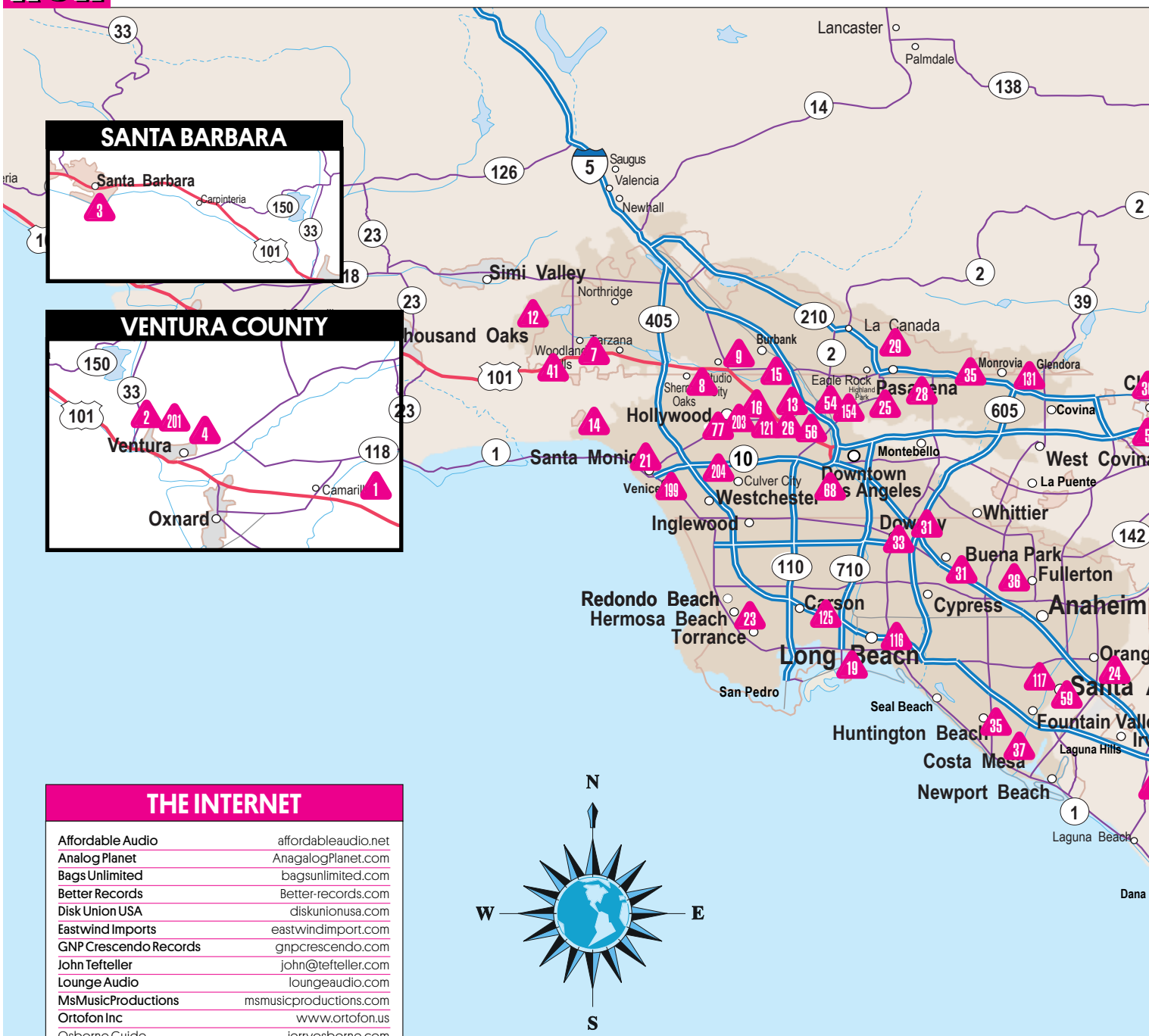

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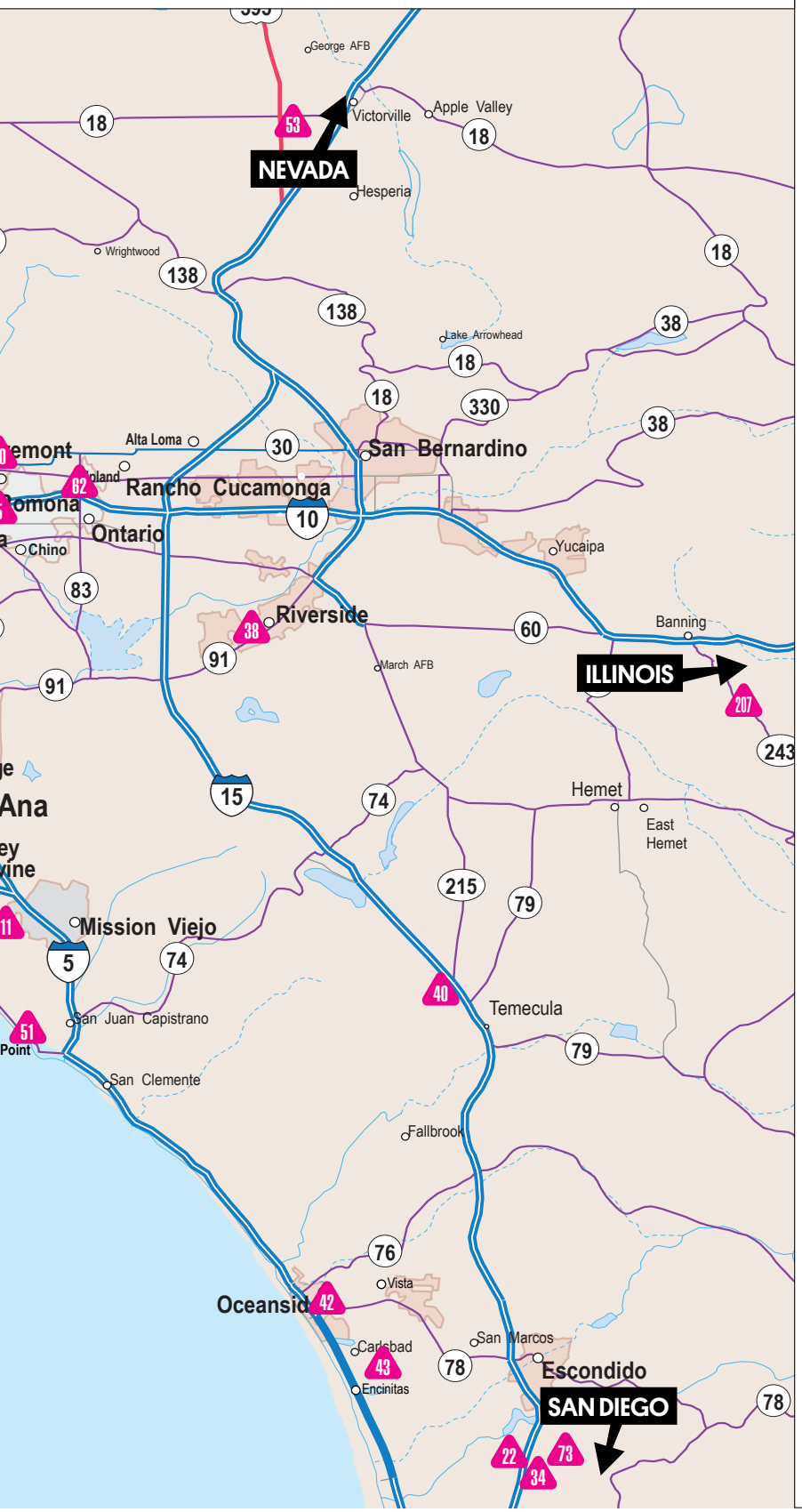

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4	Grady's Record	2546 E. Main St	Ventura	93003
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7	CD Trader	18926 Ventura Bl	Tarzana	91356
8	FreakBeat Records	13616 Ventura Blvd	Sherman Oaks	91423
9	Atomic Records	3812 W. Magnolia	Burbank	91505
12	Shelley's Stereo	22102 Clarendon Street	Woodland Hills	91367
41	Tokyo Music	19946 1/2 Ventura Blvd	Woodland Hills	91364

LOS ANGELES / SANTA MONICA

13	Mono Records	1805 Glendale Blvd	Los Angeles	90026
14	Record Surplus	12436 Santa Monica Blvd W.	Los Angeles	90025
15	Rockaway Records	2395 B Glendale Blvd	Silverlake	90039
16	Amoeba Music	6400 Sunset Bl	Hollywood	90028
21	Angel City Records & Books	218 Pier Ave	Santa Monica	90405
26	Blue Bag Records	2149 Sunset Blvd	Los Angeles	90026
54	Jacknife Records & Tapes	3149 Glendale Blvd	Los Angeles	90039
56	Caveman Vintage Music	650 N. Spring St	Los Angeles	90012
77	Headline Records	7706 Melrose Ave	Los Angeles	90046
121	Ahead Stereo	7428 Beverly Blvd	Los Angeles	90036
154	Gimme Gimme Records	5810 N Figueroa St	Highland Park	90042
199	Timewarp Records	12204 Venice Blvd.	Venice	90066
203	Revolution Records	7305 Melrose Ave	Los Angeles	90046
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62	Penny Lane Records	1551 W. 13th St. #107	Upland	91786

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11	JB Bop Records	23552 Commerce Ctr. Dr. Ste.	E Laguna Hills	92655
24	Analog Record Shop	12872 Newport Ave	Tustin	92780
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32	Burger Records	645a S. State College Blvd.	Fullerton	92831
33	Far West Record Supply	SEE OC Record Show	Buena Park	90620
36	Black Hole Records	108 North Harbor Blvd	Fullerton	92832
37	Factory Records	440 E 17th Street	Costa Mesa	92627
59	Left of the Dial Records	320 French St., Unit B	Santa Ana	92701
117	Beatnik Bandito	417 N. Broadway St	Santa Ana	92701

RIVERSIDE COUNTY

38	Mad Platter	1223 University Ave	Riverside	92501
39	Groovers	215 W. Big Springs Rd.	Riverside	92507
40	Old Town Records	42012 Main Street	Temecula	92590

SAN DIEGO / COUNTY

42	Spin Records	370 Grand Ave	Carlsbad	92008
43	Lou's Records	434 N. Coast Highway 101	Encinitas	92024
34	Moldy Toes Records	221 S Ola Vista	San Clemente	92672
73	Stereo Unlimited	3191 Sportsw Arena Blvd	San Diego	92110
22	M Theory Records	915 W. Washington Ave	San Diego	92103

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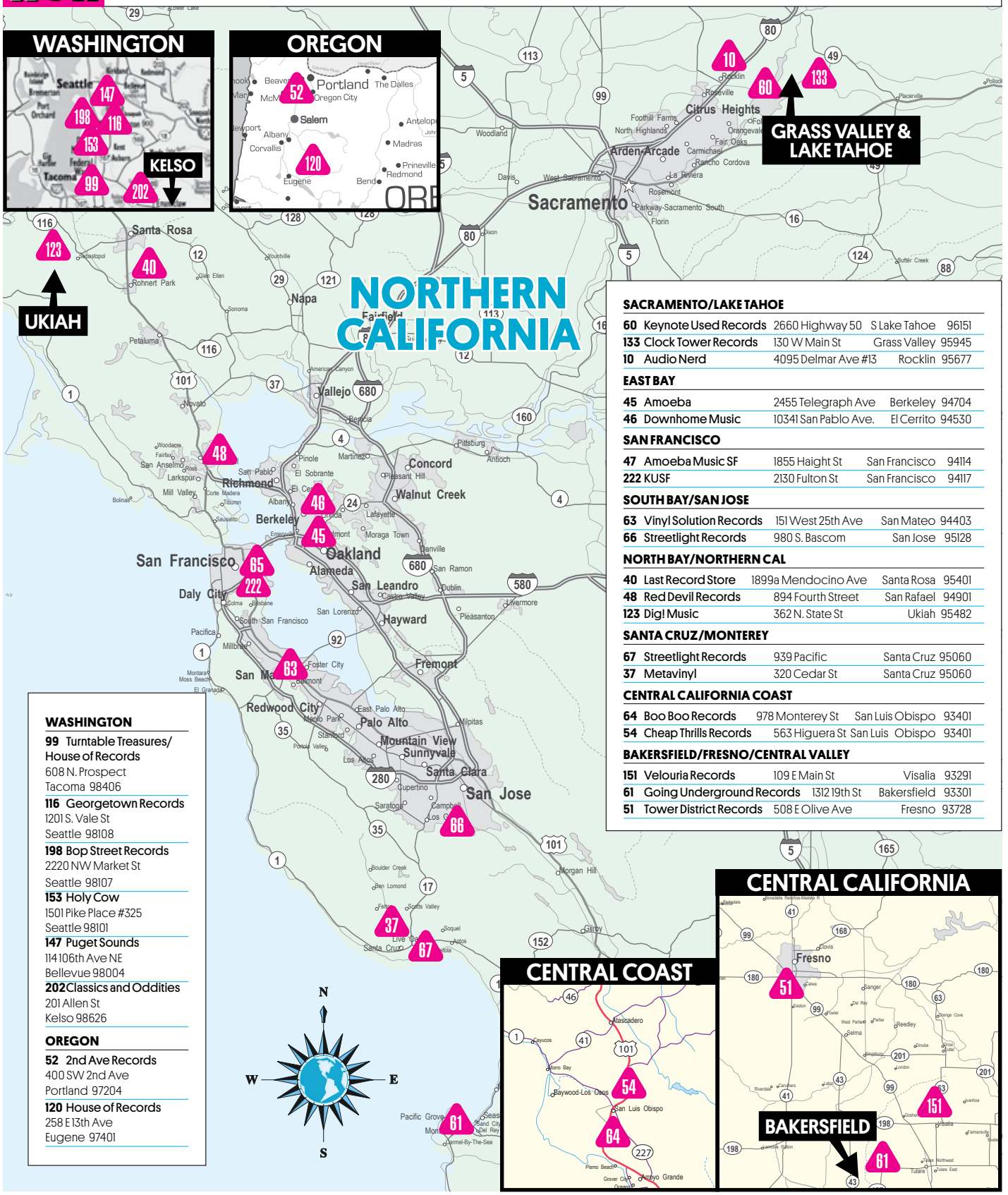

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60	Keynote Used Records	2660 Highway 50	S Lake Tahoe	96151
133	Clock Tower Records	130 W Main St	Grass Valley	95945
10	Audio Nerd	4095 Delmar Ave #13	Rocklin	95677

EAST BAY

45	Amoeba	2455 Telegraph Ave	Berkeley	94704
46	Downhome Music	10341 San Pablo Ave.	El Cerrito	94530

SAN FRANCISCO

47	Amoeba Music SF	1855 Haight St	San Francisco	94114
222	KUSF	2130 Fulton St	San Francisco	94117

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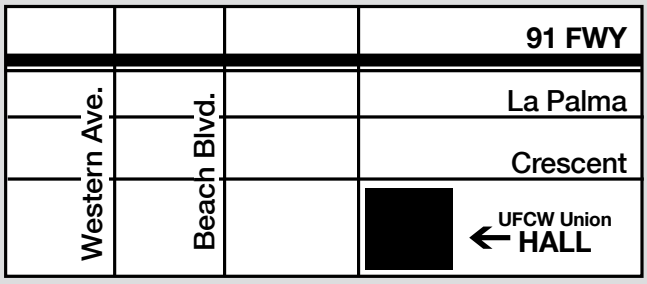
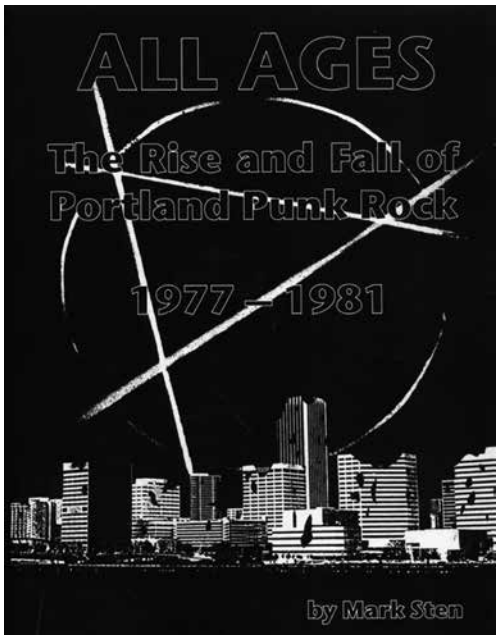


PORTLAND PUNK

The City of Roses' first wave of punk is chronicled in Mark Sten's *All Ages: The Rise and Fall of Portland Punk Rock, 1977-1981*

WHEN PUNK ROCK appeared in the late 1970's it was as if someone suddenly threw down the gauntlet. You were either for or against it, rarely in between. From the punk perspective, rock had become overly indulgent. To the serious musician punk's inherent simplicity seemed banal.



Initially, punk was the uninvited guest at the party. In the face of most acceptable commercial rock music it sounded loud, stupid and obnoxious. Whereas rock music had become more and more sophisticated over the years, punk signaled an immediate return to the root. Strip away everything that isn't necessary. The space is just as important as the notes.

The Ramones. Their first album is the blueprint for late 70's punk. The guitar and bass play nothing but down strokes. There are never any drum fills. The songs are rarely over two minutes long. The arrangements involve a verse, a chorus, and maybe a bridge. The lyrics are brief and repetitive. The recording is devoid of any effects. The sound is dry and in your face. When it appears in 1976, the Ramones first album sounds like the antecedent to everything associated with contemporary rock & roll. It wasn't, of course, but it sure felt that way.

Punk was never just about the music. It was also about fashion, social and sexual politics, and establishing a new order. Long hair and bellbottoms were out. Women and homosexuals were encouraged to participate. Even the drugs were different. Amphetamine replaced acid. Energy and focus were of crucial importance. Punk was about being in the moment, or ahead of it. There was no time for reflection.

You're often most afraid of what you can't understand. That was certainly true of punk, or at least from the viewpoint of club owners, radio programmers and the mainstream press. Clubs were reluctant to book bands that played original material. Radio had a similar outlook. Stations wouldn't play anything that didn't sound familiar. Most, but not all, critics compared punk to existing musical standards, which of course, it could never live up to. In this regard, it was considered inconsequential.

But now, nearly 40 years after the fact, punks have the last laugh. In one form or another punk rock still exists, and it thrives. It has even infiltrated the mainstream. What was once forbidden is now acceptable. Punk music is used in car commercials. The Ramones simple formula has been co-opted by hundreds, no thousands of bands. The sound of punk is ubiquitous. It's difficult to remember a time when punk was so divisive, but brother it was, and sometimes it's important to look back, to better understand what punk was up against at the beginning, when it was still outlaw music.

There have been many books written about punk rock, most focusing on the scenes in large metropolitan cities like New York and London, which is fine, but it doesn't give you the full picture. Punk was happening everywhere. For example, I moved to Des Moines, Iowa in 1980 to attend college, and when I got there the first thing I did was seek out the underground music scene. Actually, the punks in Des Moines beat me to it.

They somehow heard one of their tribe, fresh meat so to speak, had moved to town. The unspoken leader of the punk scene in Des Moines, one Charles Chesterman, singer for the Law and later, Scruffy The Cat, found me before I found him. Chesterman came storming onto campus on his motor scooter, scooped me up onto the back, and introduced me to a very different side of the city. I was quick to learn the scene in Des Moines was small, but very diverse.

Coming from the big city of Chicago, it was refreshing to realize the scene in Des Moines was made up all kinds of different individuals, and unlike the larger metropolitan cities, the scene in Des Moines existed outside the glare of the media attention. It was allowed to gestate slowly, and manifest itself in ways that probably wouldn't be possible in a big city. Folks that might have been ostracized were accepted with open arms in Des Moines. It's too bad no one's written a book about it, which brings me to the real reason we're here.

These days Portland, Oregon is considered one of the

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

hippest cities on the planet, but that wasn't always the case. Back in 1977, when the whole punk thing kicked off in Portland, the city seemed off the beaten path and was considered secondary to nearby Seattle. With the exception of touring punk bands from California like the Dils and the Dead Kennedys, Portland was not a necessary stop on anyone's touring schedule.

Part of the problem was, there wasn't any places to play. Unless a promoter specifically brought someone to town, clubs wouldn't book out of town bands. The other problem was, there wasn't much of an audience. In the beginning, Portland punks numbered in the hundreds, or less. Of course, this isn't to say Portland punks weren't committed to the cause. Indeed they were, and if you don't believe me take a gander at *All Ages: The Rise And Fall Of Portland Punk 1977-1981*, a new book written by one of Portland's original punks, and one of it's major participants, Mark Sten.

As far as I can tell, there has never been a book to feature in such vivid detail the particulars of a local music scene. Sten was there from the beginning, and it seems like he witnessed just about every punk show that happened in Portland between 1977 and 1981. More than just a witness, he participated as a member of a numerous bands and as a promoter. What's amazing is, Sten seems to remember everything, or at least he took very copious notes. Reading *All Ages* seems daunting at first, because there's so much information to take in. Holding it in your hands, it's the size of a phone book.

Sten doesn't just write about the scene's bigger bands, he mentions every local band that ever played a show in town. He also spends a great deal of time talking about a fascinating organization called Revenge, which later mutated into AAA. Since the Portland scene was so small, band members and scene makers banded together to form a co-operative that would book shows and make sure all the local bands got a chance to play.

Since local clubs were initially loath to book punk bands, this meant finding a VFW hall, or some other appropriate venue in which to put on a performance. These places were not always easy to find, and if they could be found, once a show took place the venue was usually reluctant to have the Revenge/AAA crew back a second time. This was due, in part, to the violence associated with punk rock, or maybe perceived violence is a better way of putting it.

Punk is a physical music, not one in which the spectator is merely a bystander. Back in the late '70s people danced at rock shows, or they stood around at the bar. Punk, by the true nature of what it is, demanded the listener become more actively involved. The invisible wall that previously existed between the musician and the audience was broken down. In many cases the guy or girl standing at the bar one minute was suddenly up onstage the next. No change of costume required. No hiding in the dressing room. No grand entrance. Since everyone on the Portland scene already knew each other anyway, there was no need for such shenanigans. It was like one big family, albeit a dysfunctional family, but for the most part the participants pulled together. If they didn't, the whole scene may have simply died on the vine.

In *All Ages*, Sten recalls every detail of Revenge/AAA meetings. He not only remembers the purpose for these meetings, but the personal dynamics of the people involved. This is actually one of the most interesting aspects of the book. Sten isn't afraid to dissect every major personality on the Portland scene in minute deal. Sometimes the portrait he paints isn't entirely flattering, but it feels evenhanded. Over the course of *All Ages* we also find out about Sten, and he doesn't shy away from revealing his own failings.

It's important to remember that most of the early participants on the Portland scene were very

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young. Older folks like Sten, who had been playing in bands since the 60's, naturally assumed the role of mentor. One of the most fascinating personalities on the scene was Fred Cole, who operated a music shop with his wife Toody, and fronted important Portland punk bands like the Rats and Dead Moon. Cole made it possible for many aspiring young musicians to purchase instruments and become actively involved in the scene. The Cole household even served as a surrogate family for some of the scene's misplaced youth.

There are chapters in *All Ages* that focus on local media and it's initial reluctance to write about the Portland punk scene in a positive light, if they wrote about it at all. This, in turn, spawned self-published fanzines like Noize Magazine and Ragmag, which were a crucial source of information and gossip. Sten also introduces us to people like Tom Robinson, who became the soundman for all the early punk shows, and eventually operated Wave Studio where many of the early Portland punk records were committed to tape.

The best chapters in *All Ages* are about the bands, and there were a lot of them. You might recognize names like the Wipers, Poison Idea and New Boys, but what about Sado-Nation, the Cleavers, Smegma, LoTek, the Ziplocs, and Illicit Order? Unless you were there to witness them, these bands might otherwise be lost to the mists of time. Sten understands that everything, even seemingly insignificant events, are important to our understanding of the entire picture.

As I said, I've never seen a book that delves into such detail, and you don't just get to read about the bands, you get to see them as well. *All Ages* is richly illustrated with band photos and reproductions of old concert fliers, and there's even a map on the back cover of the book to give you an idea of the scene's geography.

You might recognize names like the Wipers, Poison Idea and New Boys, but what about Sado-Nation, the Cleavers, Smegma, LoTek, the Ziplocs, and Illicit Order? Unless you were there to witness them, these bands might otherwise be lost to the mists of time.

While I've already written quite a bit about what *All Ages* is about, it feels like I've only scratched the surface. The book is so rich with detail it sometimes seems overwhelming. In some cases, I had to go back and re-read certain sections because I wasn't able to take it all in the first time. There are also points at which Sten gets bogged down in the particulars of a Revenge or AAA meeting, and while this may seem interesting to the participants, I found myself wanting to skip ahead. Fortunately, the narrative follows an emotional arc that requires you to stay the course, and in the end you'll be glad you did.

Ric Menck has been involved in making music for over 35 years. His band Velvet Crush released the classic Teenage Symphonies To God on Creation Records, and he has played drums with Matthew Sweet, Liz Phair, Marianne Faithfull, Aimee Mann and many others. He lives in Studio City with his wife and works at Freakbeat Records.

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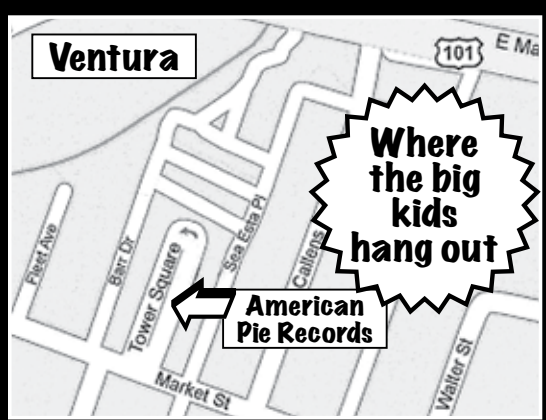

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RE-LOADED

The 45th Anniversary Edition of The Velvet Underground's *Loaded*

BY RICHIE UNTERBERGER

RECORDED AFTER LEAVING THEIR original label (MGM) for Atlantic, *Loaded* was the Velvet Underground's most determined—indeed, only—stab at conventional rock success. Multi-instrumentalist/sometime singer Doug Yule has commented that the mission was to make a commercial record, leader Lou Reed once claiming he gave Atlantic a record "loaded" with hits. While none of the songs actually were hits, at least two ("Rock and Roll" and "Sweet Jane") should have been.

Those exuberant power chord-driven tunes remain the band's most accessible classics. But Loaded had its share of other catchy tunes, whether verging on harmony pop ("Who Loves the Sun") or doo wop ("I Found a Reason"). There was still kinky lyrical weirdness in "New Age" and "Sweet Jane." There were also surprising turns into, with variable success, funky hard rock and even, on "Lonesome Cowboy Bill," semi-country-rock. Compared to their MGM records, the production on *Loaded* was downright slick. The Velvets had finally turned into a relatively conventional band, their distinction lying mostly in Lou Reed's songwriting rather than unusual or experimental arrangements.

So the Velvet Underground's fourth and final studio album with Lou Reed might have been their most "normal" LP. But the conditions surrounding its production were hardly run-of-the-mill. Virtually all of it was recorded with substitute drummers, owing to Maureen Tucker's pregnancy. Reed left the band after it was completed, but before it was released, helping to ensure its failure to chart. Interspersed with the studio sessions were the band's first regular performances in their New York City home for three years in a summer residency at Max's Kansas City, Tucker's place taken by Doug Yule's teenager younger brother, Billy. And there were oodles of outtakes, demos, and alternate versions that didn't make the finished ten-song disc, not to mention a good number of lo-fi

recordings of 1970 concerts prior to Reed's departure.

There were so many extras, in fact, that there's relatively little problem constructing a six-disc box set including and (mostly) around the *Loaded* album. The very thought of such an extravaganza would have been considered folly even ten or fifteen years ago, let alone when Loaded was released in late 1970. Similarly-sized deluxe box set editions of the Velvets' first three albums in the past few years, however, have made such a package for their studio finale not just acceptable, but expected. Yet in comparison to those previous deluxe doorstops, there's no denying that as much fine music as it contains, Rhino's *Loaded* (Re-Loaded 45th Anniversary Edition) doesn't quite measure up to the standards of the other expanded boxes.

One reason is that the extras aren't quite as exciting this time around, and feature less prime material that's previously failed to gain official release. The basic checklist:

Besides the original album in stereo (the bulk of disc one), including the full-length versions of "Sweet Jane" and "New Age" that first appeared on the 1995 *Peel Slowly and See* box, you also get the promotional mono version. That's certainly rare, but it's not as different from the stereo edition as the mono version of the third, self-titled VU album was from its stereo counterpart (and its so-called "closet mix," also included in the deluxe edition of The Velvet Underground). The mono rarities are filled out by the tracks that appeared on the mono 45 with "Who Loves the Sun"/"Oh! Sweet Nuthin,'" as well as the mono single "Rock and Roll"/"Lonesome Cowboy Bill."

What mono single of "Rock and Roll"/"Lonesome Cowboy Bill," incredulous VU collectors are shouting? Well, that second 45, though assigned a catalog number, was never actually released. This isn't the first expanded edition of a classic rock album to include a mono version of a disc that didn't even get issued. But it does indicate how far down in the barrel you have to reach to come up with something new VU at this point.

The highest-quality extras are the aforementioned demos, outtakes, and alternate versions (here labeled "early versions"). Throw in some cuts tagged as alternate mixes, and you've got 25 such bonus tracks in all. Most are on disc three (titled "demos, early versions & alternate mixes"); four items noted, as "outtakes" are bonus tracks on disc one. Some of the "alternate mixes" are more interesting than you'd think from that term, adding longer beginnings and endings. (Note that "Ride into the Sun" is called an "outtake" here and a "demo" on Rhino's 1997 two-CD *Fully Loaded Edition* of the album.)

But here's the most important thing to know: most of these 25 selections were on *Fully Loaded Edition*. The only entirely unheard additions are quite peripheral: alternate mixes of "Cool It Down" (which does have an extra piano lick and count-in at the beginning), "Sweet Jane" (with a slightly longer instrumental intro), and "Lonesome Cowboy Bill." So if your principal interest in *Loaded* is the studio material, you're pretty well set with *Fully Loaded Edition*. And you don't get David Fricke's lengthy historical liner notes in the six-disc box. (As if it wasn't enough of a headache keeping all of this straight, *Re-Loaded* is missing the "alternate demo" version of "Satellite of Love" that appears on *Fully*

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Loaded Edition, instead using the demo that appeared on the 1995 *Peel Slowly and See* box. It's also missing a yet longer version of "New Age" that was on *Fully Loaded Edition*.)

Say you haven't heard *Fully Loaded Edition*, however. Are these studio leftovers worth hearing? Sure, as they include quite a few songs that didn't make it onto *Loaded* in any fashion (like the goofy Tucker-sung "I'm Sticking with You" and the languid ballad "Ride into the Sun"), among them a few that surfaced on early Reed solo albums ("Satellite of Love," "Sad Song," "Walk and Talk," and the glorious "Ocean"). There are also significantly different (and sometimes ramshackle) arrangements of familiar songs, like the doo-wop vocals in the intro to the alternate mix of "Rock & Roll"; a country-folk-blues take on "I Found a Reason"(recorded in late 1969, prior to the actual *Loaded* sessions) with harmonica; a much shorter "Oh! Sweet Nuthin'" with Reed, not Yule, on lead vocal; or a clunky early "Cool It Down" with New Orleans-style R&B piano.

There was so much material floating around, in fact, that there could have easily been a good double album in the unlikely event Atlantic would have green-lighted such a thing. Something all these alternates reinforces, though, is that the Velvets didn't quite pick the cream of their crop for *Loaded*, or always record the best possible version. Leaving "Ocean" off is a testament to their failure to quite nail the arrangement they wanted of this magnificent epic, and there were some songs they were already playing in concert (like the great ballad "Lisa Says," as heard on 1969 Velvet Underground Live) that were markedly superior to *Loaded*'s lesser cuts. "Satellite of Love" and "Sad Song" were certainly better than some of those lesser cuts too.

As for some of the better tracks that did make the cut, "New Age"'s revised lyrics (compare it to the one on 1969 V*elvet Underground Live*) sound clumsy and awkward. "Sweet Jane" was inexplicably missing its divine bridge on the original LP, though it's fortunately restored here. Only on "Rock and Roll" — their great hit single that should have been — did they really knock it out of the park, recording the best of the many existing live and studio versions.

Disc four goes outside the studio to present the *Live at Max's Kansas City* album, recorded at Lou Reed's last show with the band (barring their reunion gigs in the 1990s) on August 23, 1970. Though more a historical document than an excellent, significant concert recording (as *1969 Velvet Underground Live* was), *Max's* (originally issued as a 1972 LP) was fun in its own way, capturing the VU as a straight-out club band with Billy Yule bashing away on drums. It's remastered here, though there's only so much you can do with a tape made on a portable cassette recorder, complete with intrusive tableside chat.

It also has bonus tracks—but not as many as it should have. You see, in 2004 Rhino's two-CD expanded *Max's* had 17 songs. *Re-Loaded* only includes 15 of those, omitting "Who Loves the Sun" and "version 2" of "Sweet Jane." Admittedly you couldn't have put on all 17 tracks without splitting this into two much shorter discs or putting a couple cuts on a CD with non-*Max's* material. But a six-disc expanded edition should get everything on there somehow. And again, the liner notes on the Rhino *Max's* (with extensive quotes from members of the Velvets and associates) make for one more reason *Re-Loaded* doesn't make that previous iteration redundant.

Disc five has the body of material that committed VU fans are most interested to hear — eleven live songs from a show at Philadelphia's Second Fret on May 9, 1970, all of them previously unreleased (though they've long been bootlegged). It was, reveal the track listings, recorded by fan Bob Kachnycz "in glorious mono on a reel-to-reel at the back of the club (where the only electrical outlet was, by the soda

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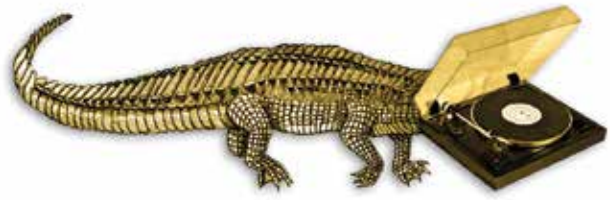

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 38

machine), with about 15 people in attendance."

And here's the even more naked truth: it's a disappointment, as the quality's so hissy and lo-fi that it's often heard to make out the lyrics. Yes, the quality on *Max's* was no great shakes; even the original sleeve note to that LP declared, "in some ways, this record may be looked at as the first legitimate bootleg album." But even by 1970 bootleg standards, the *Second Fret* tape is rough going — significantly rougher, in fact, than the valuable live recordings featured on the deluxe box editions of the VU's first two albums.

Getting past the sound quality and treating this primarily as an instructive artifact rather than entertainment, this holds some interest for capturing, if faintly, the band as they sounded onstage in the early phases of *Loaded*'s production. There are live versions of seven *Loaded* songs, as well as renditions of "I'm Waiting for the Man," "Candy Says," "What Goes On," and "Some Kinda Love." From what you can make out, the band plays with commendable energy, extending "Sweet Jane" to six minutes and, more unusually, "Train Round the Bend" to nine.

"Train Round the Bend" and "Oh! Sweet Nuthin'" also benefit from some unusual tremolo guitar that gives the songs an idiosyncratic pulsing sound, almost as if the notes are sending Morse code from the basement. Yet the set is also handicapped by the absence of the pregnant Moe Tucker, the Velvets soldiering on as the trio of Reed, Doug Yule, and guitarist Sterling Morrison. That gives the set a ghostly sparse vibe, and though Yule gamely switches from bass to drums on four songs, most of the set is drumless, making this an even more peculiar relic.

Disc six, unavailable at press time, is an audio-only DVD with (to quote the track listings) a "96/24 Hi-Resolution Surround Sound Remix, 96/24 Hi-Resolution Downmix and 96/24 Hi-Resolution Stereo Mix." *Loaded* might have been the Velvets' glossiest studio product by some distance, but it wasn't exactly Quadrophenia in terms of density and sonic layering. My vote would have been to lower the list price by limiting the size of *Re-Loaded* to five discs. Maybe that would have made room for longer and more detailed liner notes, here handled by Lenny Kaye (one of the first rock critics to give Velvet Underground albums lengthy, positive reviews) in an essay that's as much of an overall VU appreciation as an historical analysis of *Loaded* itself.

Still, if this box's mission is to document the *Loaded* era with as much thoroughness as possible, it very nearly succeeds, with those two missing *Max's* tracks, one of the longer versions of "New Age," and the alternate demo of "Satellite of Love" notable absentees. With this and Universal's three recent multi-disc deluxe editions of the first three Velvet Underground albums, the band's recorded legacy is enshrined with more near-definitive completeness than anyone could have imagined during their lifetime. In fact, it's now preserved with more near-definitive completeness than has been granted almost any other comparably major rock act. The one missing link is an expanded box of *1969 Velvet Underground Live* — but even that's on the way, with a four-CD box of their '69 recordings at San Francisco's Matrix club that will be reviewed next issue.

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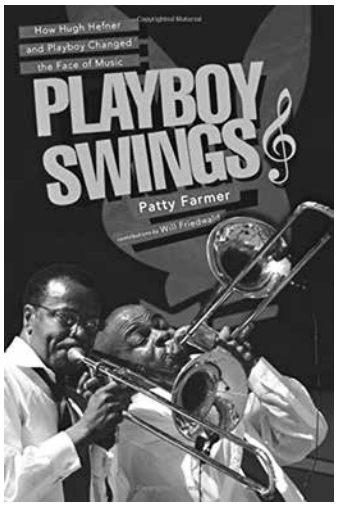
Playboy Magazine's Jazz Legacy

BY ARMAND LEWIS



THROUGH THE EARLY AND mid twentieth century, popular music may have become ubiquitous on radio and on 78rpm records, but there were few print publications that discussed music, the musicians who made it, or trends within genres of music itself. While Billboard magazine covered the music industry as a business the same way The Wall Street Journal covers the financial world, there were really no general interest publications that regularly included coverage of music written for the general public's point of view.

Downbeat and Metronome magazines were read by the hip, devoted fans of both swing and modern jazz, but the general public, unaware of such specialty publications, would not be exposed to modern music in the general periodicals of the day. Time Magazine, Life Magazine and the rest may occasionally do stories on the biggest artist of the day (mostly classical composers and conductors), but popular music – including jazz – was rarely presented.

This would all change in the early 1950s, when a magazine editor named Hugh Hefner would start his own magazine aimed at not only the young educated, professional male, but also at what was to become an upscale lifestyle for the modern person.

Playboy Magazine's reputation as a "skin magazine" belies its true nature and intent. From the very first issue, Hefners' magazine espoused a world view of freedom, inclusion and a sophisticated good life that included political and social commentary, technology (from cars to stereo equipment), architecture and décor, the arts and music – especially jazz.

Hefner and his promotional director Victor Lownes were both jazz fans and viewed jazz and home audio equipment as integral parts of the good life. It was not long before the success of Playboy Magazine would lead them to promote jazz in both the magazine as well as the outside world.

The story of how Playboy utilized jazz in it's growing entertainment empire from the 1950s "Mad Man" era forward to today is chronicled in Patty Farmers' new book "Playboy Swings – How Hugh Hefner and Playboy Changed the Face of Music" (Beaufort Books ISBN: 9780825307881).

With each chapter tied to a specific Playboy presentation, (TV shows, nightclub or festival), the book compiles oral histories from many of the artists and employees who worked for the company's entertainment venues. Many of the singers, from Marlena Shaw to Lainie Kazan, and even more of the stand-up comics, including Dick

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Gregory and Shecky Green, are interviewed extensively, weaving a tapestry of what it was like to work at Playboy's nightclub circuit – probably the last night-club circuit in the country before the rise of specifically themed clubs for comedy, jazz, etc... ended the nightclub era for good.

Sadly, with so many of the jazz greats who played both the clubs and early festivals no longer with us, the book is somewhat light on interviews with the musicians themselves. There are sections with saxophonist Al Belletto, who led the house band in the New Orleans Playboy club; also discussions with pianists Monty Alexander, who got his start at the Los Angeles club, which led to his first recordings for the Pacific Jazz label.

> Hefner and his promotional director Victor Lownes were both jazz fans and viewed jazz and home audio equipment as integral parts of the good life.

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